



Russian River Biological Opinion Update – September 2012

The Sonoma County Water Agency is continually planning and implementing the Russian River Biological Opinion requirements. To better communicate the progress and timeline of this work, the Water Agency has provided the below outline of project updates. For more detailed information about these activities, please visit www.sonomacountywater.org.

Dry Creek Demonstration Project

- Construction began on the Quivira Vineyards and Winery segment of the demonstration project on September 4. This component includes (1) installation of a side channel to provide refuge for coho and steelhead during the winter and (2) placement of 130 large logs, root wads and 560 tons of boulders that will provide hiding places for young fish.
- Large redwood/Douglas fir trees and trees with root wads are being delivered to a storage site near Warms Springs Dam.
- Right-of-way negotiations are underway with landowners for the remainder of the project.

Dry Creek Habitat Enhancement Study

- The Conceptual Design Report for the Dry Creek Habitat Enhancement has been finalized, following a May meeting with NMFS and California Department of Fish & Game. This report presents conceptual designs for potential habitat improvements areas beyond the 1-mile demonstration project.
- The Water Agency, National Marine Fisheries Service, Department of Fish & Game and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers are working with consultants, ESSA, to develop clear success measures for habitat enhancement. The plan should be completed in 2012.

Tributary Fish Passage and Habitat Enhancement Projects

- The Grape Creek passage project (creating fish passage through a box culvert) will be constructed this month, once the final permits are issued. Sotoyome Resource Conservation District is managing the project for the Water Agency.
- Construction on the Wallace Creek project (the final tributary project) is awaiting agreement from one landowner for a small construction easement.
- During the summer season, thousands of juvenile steelhead and coho were counted and released in migrant traps in the Russian River, at Mirabel, in Dry Creek, Mark West Creek and Dutch Bill Creek. Final counts will be available later this year.

Mirabel Screen and Fish Ladder Replacement

- The comment period closed on August 24th for a Notice of Preparation for the environmental analysis. Comments were received from the State Water Resources Control Board and the California Department of Fish and Game.
- The Water Agency received a \$255,000 California Department of Fish and Game Fishery Restoration Grant for design of the project. The 65% design was received in mid-March, and was reviewed by Water Agency staff.
- A grant application to CDFG for construction funds for the fish ladder resulted in a site visit by the selection committee. The grant announcement is expected in early 2013.

Russian River Estuary Management Project

- The Biological Opinion requires the Water Agency to study the jetty to determine if and how it impacts the formation of the sand bar (barrier beach) and lagoon water surface elevation. Several technical studies analyzing the jetty will begin later this month, pending the receipt of a permit from the California Coastal Commission.
- A settlement, signed by both parties, is pending court approval in the lawsuit filed by the Russian River Watershed Protection Committee challenging the Estuary Management Project final Environmental Impact Report.
- A three-year general lease was received from the State Lands Commission for the estuary management project.
- A Marine Mammal Protection Act Incidental Harassment Authorization (IHA) was received from National Marine Fisheries Service for activities that could potentially disturb seals (and other pinnipeds). As in past years, the IHA requires extensive monitoring of seals prior, during and after any beach activity. In addition, it requires bi-monthly monitoring of seals and limits activities when seal pups are on the beach.
- The 2012 biological and water quality monitoring is ongoing through the Lagoon Management Period (which ends on October 15).

Fish Flow Project

Work is occurring internally on the preparation of the draft Environmental Impact Report for the Fish Habitat Flows and Water Rights Project.

- EIR Schedule
 - Release Draft EIR in late 2012
 - Release Final EIR in summer 2013
 - BO requires Board to certify Final EIR by September 24, 2013.

EIR will be prepared by Water Agency staff, with assistance from consultants on some areas of impact analysis.

Interim Flow Changes

- The State Water Resources Board issued a 2012 Temporary Urgency Change order on May 2. The order requires fisheries reports, water quality monitoring and recognizes the continuing efforts by the contractors and Water Agency with regard to water use efficiency.
- Reports for the 2011 TUC were submitted to the State Water Board on March 31, 2012.

Public Outreach

- An outreach campaign (postcards, signage, updated web page) on the Dry Creek habitat enhancement demonstration project is ongoing.
- State Assemblyman Wes Chesbro toured the coho broodstock program and visited the Dry Creek Demonstration Project site in July.